MEDIA RELEASE

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SingHealth and Duke-NUS inaugural congress pushes the frontiers of healthcare and biomedical sciences

- More than 2,100 medical practitioners, academics and researchers brought together
- Over 600 presentations, abstracts and papers on research breakthroughs presented

Singapore, 15 October 2010 – The inaugural SingHealth Duke-NUS Scientific Congress was officially opened today by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who graced the occasion as Guest-of-Honour. The two-day congress, held at Suntec Convention Centre, sees more than 2,100 multi-disciplinary medical practitioners, academic scholars, researchers and overseas healthcare leaders, meeting to spark lively debates on pioneering research and emerging issues in the healthcare and biomedical sciences industry locally.

Topical issues presented at the Congress include a keynote lecture on innovation in the care of people with complex and chronic diseases by Professor the Lord Darzi of Denham KBE, who holds the Paul Hamlyn Chair of Surgery at Imperial College London and a stem cell symposium that brings together medical experts such as Dr Alan Colman, Principal Investigator and Dr Victor Nurcombe, Consultant at Singapore’s Institute of Medical Biology.

The programme also includes plenary and panel sessions as well as oral and poster presentations covering the spectrum of topical issues in healthcare and biomedical sciences such as challenges of combined organ transplantation, uses of umbilical cord blood, integrated genomics and molecular pathology, treatment of lung cancer and advancements in the field of cardiology.

Focus on translational clinical research to benefit patients

Professor Tan Ser Kiat, Group Chief Executive Officer, SingHealth said: “SingHealth is boosting its focus on translational clinical research, and we have had promising results with an increasing number of clinician scientists and researchers successfully securing competitive grant funding for their research projects and winning national level science awards. This has helped push the frontiers of locally-relevant “bench-to-outcome” research that significantly benefits Singaporeans. A piece of research by SERI that devised a new improved technique, Tan EndoGlide, to insert a transplant cornea is a good example of this. This technique benefited patients by offering them recovery and restored vision.”
On the significance of the congress, Professor Tan added: “The congress marks a major milestone in SingHealth’s plan to pursue academic medicine in partnership with Duke-NUS. We are excited that this shared platform will boost the exchange of research ideas between clinicians and scientists from our hospitals and the world-renowned medical school to generate new breakthroughs to help patients. We hope this event will encourage the spirit of inquiry among our healthcare professionals to continually improve patient care.”

**Commitment to speed up translation of scientific discoveries**

Professor Ranga Krishnan, Dean of Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School said: “The commitment of Duke-NUS and SingHealth to combine education, research and clinical practice will speed up the translation of scientific discoveries to the patients’ bedside. The ongoing active academic exchange between the two groups’ clinician-educators and clinician-scientists goes far beyond the regular model of collaboration between a medical school and a hospital group. We are already pursuing active collaborations in clinical research programmes. Also, we have the active and enthusiastic participation of more than 320 SingHealth clinicians, who have played an active role in shaping the curriculum for the students. And our students are getting first-hand exposure to local healthcare needs while doing their clinical clerkships within SingHealth’s healthcare institutions. We are confident that this strong partnership will help achieve our aim to boost Singapore’s biomedical science landscape and strengthen our potential to develop new treatments and clinical procedures that will benefit Singaporeans.”

In addition to lively discussions on the latest clinical and research advances, the congress will also address other aspects of public healthcare such as bridging advances in medical education and quality care, developing clinical investigators and scientists, providing age-friendly patient care services and using medical technology to further improve research and patient care.

Professor David Matchar, Co-Organising Chairperson of the Congress and Program Director for Health Services & Systems Research at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School said: “There is an urgent need to address the needs of a shifting demographic in Singapore and internationally. The Congress’ theme speaks of the importance of crossing traditional barriers: barriers between researchers and practitioners, generalists and specialists, among all variety of health care providers, and across traditional health care entities and the community. This will be a celebration of our rich and innovative enterprise.”

Associate Professor Teo Eng Kiong, Co-Organising Chairperson of the Congress, and Chief and Senior Consultant at Department of General Medicine at Changi General Hospital said: “Healthcare trends are continually shifting and the Congress was designed to address the complexities of healthcare in the 21st Century. For instance, topics on the use of innovation and technology in care management provide critical insight to healthcare professionals of the modern day. Such topics challenge us to look at new ways of improving our healthcare strategies to continually provide high quality patient care.”
In conjunction with the scientific congress, a free public forum on stem cell therapy and organ transplant will be held on Sat, 16 Oct, 4.30 to 5.40pm at Suntec City Convention Centre, Main Ballroom 2 and 3. Members of the public will find out more about: the use of umbilical cord blood to help patients with acquired brain disorders, the effectiveness of current stem cell products and the risk and benefits of being an organ donor; all topics that are current issues in the local healthcare landscape.

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About Singapore Health Services (SingHealth)

SingHealth, Singapore’s largest healthcare group, is committed to providing affordable and accessible quality healthcare to patients. Its 3 Hospitals, 5 National Specialty Centres and 9 polyclinics, backed by internationally qualified medical specialists and advanced diagnostic and treatment medical technology, offer a complete range of multi-disciplinary and integrated medical care. By pursuing excellence in Patient Care, Education and Research, SingHealth aims to be the trusted leader in healthcare for its patients, partners, staff and the community. For more information please visit: www.singhealth.com.sg

About Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore (www.duke-nus.edu.sg)

The Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore (Duke-NUS) was established in 2005 as a strategic collaboration between the Duke University School of Medicine, in N. Carolina, USA and the National University of Singapore (NUS). Duke-NUS offers a graduate entry, 4-year M.D. training programme based on the unique Duke model of education, with one year dedicated to independent study and research projects of a basic science or clinical nature. The first batch of M.D. students will graduate in 2011. Duke-NUS also offers M.D./PhD and PhD programmes. A key player in Singapore's biomedical community, Duke-NUS has five Signature Research Programmes: Cancer & Stem Cell Biology, Neuroscience and Behavioural Disorders, Emerging Infectious Diseases, Cardiovascular & Metabolic Disorders, and Health Services and Systems Research.